



From left: Tung Chiang experimenting with form in the Heath Clay Studio. Bud vases with unique glazes for Design Series 7. Tools of the trade in the Heath Clay Studio. All images courtesy of Heath Ceramics, San Francisco.

David Nash: What has been the most rewarding part of your explorations in the Clay Studio?

Tung Chiang: Having the opportunity to focus on creativity and not worry about the result was liberating. I'd never had that kind of freedom as a designer before—to do something totally focused on expression. There was a realization, when I started, that for over 60 years Heath had simply been producing objects similar to Edith Heath's initial designs. Knowing there would be a focused studio for producing new work was eye-opening for a team that had been limiting itself to making the same thing over and over again. That's really when the idea for an annual Design Series was born. For the first show, we set up a time-lapse camera overlooking the gallery space. The next morning, I cried as I watched the video—it was so emotional to see people standing in line and then rushing in to buy pieces. I had never experienced that kind of excitement around my work.

DN: What were some of the earliest Design Series themes, and how did they evolve?

TC: Each Design Series is a new challenge for me. The first one focused on candle holders—objects I'd never worked with. After that, I decided to challenge myself with scale, so I made big vases. In the third year I thought, "What if the clay isn't the final product, but rather simply a component," so I made lamps. Then, since Heath is so famous for its dinnerware, I wondered what it would mean to make non-functional

objects, so in the fifth year I focused on storytelling and emotion through animal forms.

DN: What's your focus for this Design Series?

TC: My original challenge for Design Series Eight was to look at ceramics requiring multiple pieces to connect in order to form something useful—a canister or teapot, for example. There's also the idea that when you have a canister or similar object, the magic is more about what's hidden on the inside, like a sweet treat. But then we were confronted with the pandemic, and I wondered if I should keep going forward with my idea or stop work altogether. I felt a range of emotions throughout my isolation—then I had another idea: objects called rattle pots that date back centuries. A small piece of dry clay is placed inside a sealed vessel, and when you pick it up there's a rattling sound.

DN: So instead of something delicious inside a container, you might have all sorts of feelings locked inside.

TC: We've all been impacted by the pandemic and other events this year, and while some of us have experienced a renewed sense of bravery or resilience, others have felt significant loss and sadness. Imagine a vessel sitting quietly on your shelf, and one day you go and pick it up. The rattling inside is a metaphor for the memories and feelings you experienced during that very strange time, and hearing it allows you to contemplate their meaning.

An Unequaled Architecture

Words by Anuradha S. Naik
Images by Mark Luscombe-Whyte



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“When the moon was in the constellation of Leo and Jupiter was in his own mansion, Sulian Quli Qutub Shah ordered architects and masons to prepare the plans of a city, unequalled the world over and a replica of paradise itself.” Ferishta (1560-1620)

The fifth sultan of the Qutub Shahi dynasty, Muhammad Quli, founded the city of Hyderabad in 1591. Designed in classical fashion, the city was laid on a grid with a central square. In the layout, the Sultan ordered the construction of shops, schools, mosques, *caravanserais* and baths. When everything was ready, his court moved into the new city.

Hyderabad was built as an extension to the fortified capital Golconda, which had become too small for its burgeoning population. By then the capital was synonymous with luxury; the world's only known diamond mines were situated in its nearby lands. The famous story of the *Arabian Nights* in which Sinbad the Sailor descends into the Valley of Diamonds is believed to be set in the rocky hills to the east of Hyderabad. Visitors were fascinated by Golconda and it inspired not only writers of fiction, but also intrepid traders from across the globe.

Golconda stands today as a majestic, albeit partly ruined, fort. Gazing down from its ramparts, the vista includes the monumental tombs of the Qutub Shahi dynasty. Originally from Iran, these sultans imbibed and assimilated local traditions, and their architecture reflected this syncretism. Cusped Indian arches were decorated with ceramic tiles, and the large colorful domes had lotus motifs at their base. In its day, Golconda was a kaleidoscope of oriental splendor.

The growth of the Sultan's new city was equally spectacular. It attracted migrants from far and wide and became a trading center for pearls, diamonds, ivory, steel, silk and printed cotton. It was a vibrant, cosmopolitan, thriving city, replete with Persian, Arabian, Armenian, Dutch, English, French and Portuguese traders.

The Charminar occupies the center of the original grid and dominates the old city of Hyderabad. From its imposing structure radiate streets and lanes in various directions: an undesigned, jumbled picturesqueness contributed to mainly by tiny shops displaying much color and glitter. Not just an ornamental gateway, the Charminar was used as a mosque, a school, a place to make proclamations—it even served as the headquarters of the French army under Marquis de Bussy-Castelnau in the 18th century.

From 1687 Hyderabad was briefly occupied by the Mughals, until a viceroy of the Emperor declared its independence in 1724 and established a new rule under the Asaf Jahi Nizams. Fabulously wealthy, the Nizams built several palaces in Hyderabad where Bohemian crystal chandeliers sparkled alongside the perfumed fountains of oriental courtyards. The architectural marvel that is Chowmahalla Palace, a museum today, is where grand durbars and coronations were once held. The elegant Falaknuma Palace hosted royalty from across the world.

Over the course of the 19th century, the East India Company established itself as the paramount power. The Palladian British Residency became a second node of authority, and the fabric of Hyderabad incorporated European architectural elements as the skyline changed dramatically. But despite this western infusion, Hyderabad continued to be a deeply oriental city until the turn of the 20th century. Elephants were used as transport by boys going to school, and it was not uncommon to see nobility mounted on gorgeously caparisoned horses with rich trimmings, surrounded by armed guards in procession as they wended their way along the narrow streets. The exquisitely intricate lime stucco at the Paigah Tombs, which served as the final resting place of Hyderabad's nobility from the early 18th century to the '50s, is visible testimony to the confluence of cultures in Hyderabad.

Today, the spirit of a by-gone era persists in the city of Hyderabad, amid its fading glory.





































